

general management plan
land protection plan
wilderness suitability review



GATES OF THE ARCTIC

NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE / ALASKA



INTRODUCTION

Approximately 7,263,215 acres of wilderness were designated by ANILCA in the park. Approximately 1,209,302 acres in the park and preserve are examined here for suitability.

Section 1317(a) of ANILCA directed that a review be made of the suitability or nonsuitability for preservation as wilderness of all lands not so designated by the act. Section 1317(b) specifies that "the Secretary shall conduct his review, and the President shall advise the United States Senate and House of Representatives of his recommendations, in accordance with the provisions of sections 3(c) and (d) of the Wilderness Act."

Recommendations on whether to designate suitable areas as wilderness will be made following completion of the general management plan. An EIS will be prepared as part of the wilderness recommendation process. The public will have the opportunity to review and comment on these recommendations, and public hearings will be held. Upon completion of the EIS and secretarial review, the president will make his recommendations to the Congress.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 defines wilderness as follows:

(2)(c) A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value.

Wilderness areas in Alaska have certain exceptions to the Wilderness Act specified in ANILCA. The legal guidelines for wilderness management in appendix E provide more information.

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY CRITERIA

Wilderness review criteria specific to Gates of the Arctic were developed that reflect the act's definition of wilderness. For a particular tract of land to be determined suitable for designation, it must meet the wilderness suitability criteria found on table 28.

Table 28: Wilderness Suitability Criteria

<u>Description of Land or Activity</u>		<u>Suitable for Wilderness</u>	<u>Not Suitable for Wilderness</u>	<u>Suitability Pending</u>
Land status	Federal	X		
	Federal: under application or selection			X
	State and private land, patented or tentatively approved		X	
	Private ownership of subsurface estate		X	
Mining	Areas with minor ground disturbances from past mining activities	X		
	Areas with major past ground disturbances from mining activities		X	
	Current mining activities and ground disturbances		X	
Roads and ORV trails	Unimproved roads or ORV trails that are unused or little used by motor vehicles	X		
	Improved roads and ORV trails regularly used by motor vehicles		X	
Landing strips	Unimproved or minimally improved and maintained	X		
	Improved and maintained		X	
Cabins	Uninhabited structures; hunter, hiker, and patrol cabins	X		
	Inhabited as a primary place of residence		X	
Size of unit	Greater than 5,000 acres adjacent to existing wilderness, or of a manageable size	X		
	Less than 5,000 acres or of unmanageable size		X	

These suitability criteria are based on the existing character of the land. Future development or use will be considered when making formal recommendations for designation of wilderness, but it is not an appropriate criteria for determining suitability.

SUITABILITY DETERMINATION

Approximately 1,009,638 acres of nonwilderness lands within the park and preserve meet the criteria as established by the Wilderness Act (see Wilderness Suitability map). Prior to a formal presidential recommendation, a wilderness report and environmental analysis will be prepared.

Approximately 190,023 acres of nonwilderness lands do not meet the criteria: (1) land containing subsurface mineral rights in the northeast preserve (31,322 acres); (2) ATV use easements in the Anaktuvuk Pass/Chandler Lake area (about 56 miles of 200-foot-wide nonwilderness corridors equals about 1,360 acres); and (3) native village and regional corporation lands in the Anaktuvuk Pass/Chandler Lake area, approved small tracts, and approved native allotments (157,341 acres). All of these lands, except for the village of Anaktuvuk Pass, would be suitable for wilderness designation if nonconforming uses (ATVs), outstanding rights, or nonfederal ownership were eliminated.

Approximately 9,641 acres of nonwilderness lands cannot have their suitability determined until pending applications are resolved. These lands include pending native allotments, native regional corporation lands under application, and cemetery and historical sites (14(h)(1) sites). Each of the eight cemetery and historical site applications in nonwilderness land included an entire section (640 acres). Resolution of these applications could result in all 640 acres, a few acres, or no acres being transferred to the nonfederal applicant depending on facts and findings surrounding the specific cemetery or historical site.

Based on its existing character, the entire southwest preserve is suitable for wilderness except for lands conveyed or under application. ANILCA section 201(4)(b, c, d, and e) permits surface access across the southwest preserve. The wilderness recommendation will have to consider the existing authority for that right-of-way. All future wilderness recommendations will recognize valid existing rights including rights-of-way under RS 2477.

All lands determined suitable for wilderness designation will be managed under the terms of ANILCA to maintain the wilderness character and values of the lands until designation recommendations have been proposed and Congress has acted on these proposals.



- GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PRESERVE BOUNDARY
- GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY
- EXISTING WILDERNESS (7,283,215 ACRES)
- SUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS (1,009,838 ACRES)
- UNSUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DUE TO SUBSURFACE RIGHTS (31,322 ACRES)
- UNSUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DUE TO ATV USE EASEMENT (1,300 ACRES)
- UNSUITABLE FOR WILDERNESS DUE TO NONFEDERAL LAND (187,341 ACRES)
- SUITABLE IF RETAINED IN FEDERAL OWNERSHIP (8,841 ACRES)

WILDERNESS SUITABILITY

GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR / NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

